THE RYUKYUS STORY

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Major General J. R. Sheetz, Commanding General,
Ryukyus Command.

YOU MAY BE SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT.....

Okinawa has, in addition to an abundance of sweet potatoes, midget bananas, poisonous reptiles, battle-scarred landscape, and big winds, a fascinating history as a diminutive Oriental state.

Legendary heroes, the rise and fall of dynasties, alternating periods of vigorous independence and foreign domination; fine artists and lordly patrons of the arts; sages and statesmen; philosophers and pedants; pious priests and patient peasants were the hallmarks of this varied and often exciting society. In fact, the story of the entire Ryukyus has all the trappings of its more pretentious neighbors.

Written records of the Ryukyus begin about 600 A.D., and mention several unsuccessful overtures by China and Japan, demanding tribute and submission.

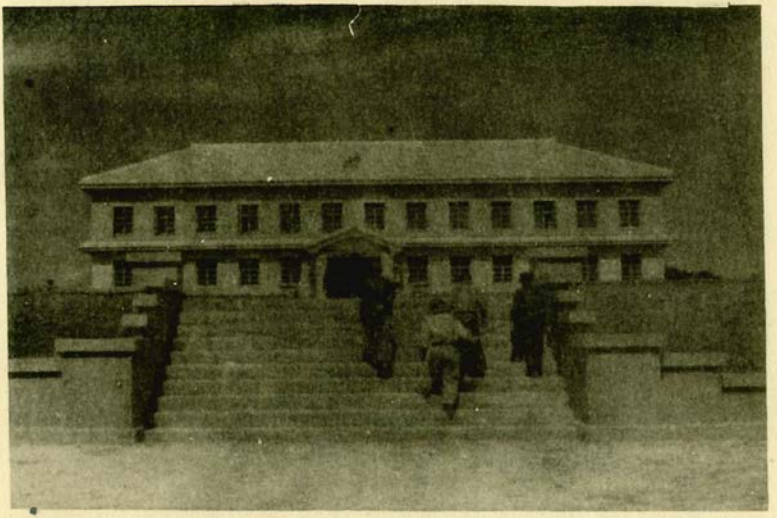
The year 1187 is, however, the first momentous date in Ryukyu history. At that time Shunten, the son of a Japanese hero, Minamoto Tanetomo, and an Okinawan princess, established himself as King of all Okinawa, acknowledged the overlordship of the Prince of Satsuma in Kyushu, and thus gave basis to later Japanese claims to the islands. Under this line of rulers - King Eiso being a notable one - the Unified Kingdom made rapid strides in cultural development. A new form of taxation was established. Turtle-back tombs from China and Buddhism from Japan were introduced; internal peace was achieved throughout the Ryukyus.

A few generations later, the United Kingdom collapsed and Okinawa reverted to feudal-

ism. In 1372, King Satto, usurper of the Shuri throne, acknowledged sovereignty of the Ming dynasty in China, imported Chinese traders and teachers, and again unified his country. Under Satto, the Ryukyuans became enterprising and prosperous sea traders, voyaging as far as Korea, the East Indies, and the Philippines. During this period Chinese arts, philosophy, and crafts were studied and adopted.

In 1477 the third King of the second Sho-dynasty, Sho-shin, ascended the Shuri throne and introduced, that which local historians proudly claim, Okinawa's Golden Age. Sho-shin not only encouraged trade, the source of his country's wealth and power, but also spent large amounts of revenue from this source to enhance the state. He sought to unify and beautify the nation. He also sought to enfeeble his vassal nobles by gathering them into his capital, encouraging them to build fine villas, patronize the arts, satiate themselves with luxury, and as a consequence to forego the sterner ways of war. He built Shuri Castle, rebuilt Shuri city on a unified plan, instituted reforestation and conservation programs; he established a rigid caste system with class differentiations in costume and manners; and he secured all the arms of the island and stored them in his national warehouses. He also directed the recording of the "Omoro", the Okinawa Divine Poem.

King Sho-shin's successors carried on the grand tradition until 1609, at which time the Golden Age came to an abrupt and disastrous end. This occurred when Japan, which had just suffered ignominious defeat in Korea, gathered a small fleet together and invaded the defenseless island as punishment for Okinawa's refusal to aid the Emperor. During the next few years, while the



One of the brightest spots in the rehabilitation of the Ryukyus Islands is the construction of the Ryukyu University on the site of the old Shuri Castle on the outskirts of Naha. The first graduating class will receive their diplomas in 1953, the 100th anniversary of the landing by Americans in Naha under Commodore Matthew C. Perry.

King of Okinawa remained in Japan as a privileged hostage, Japanese opportunists exploited and impoverished the island and monopolized the China trade.

However, the seemingly strange inconsistency of Japanese policy aided local economic reconstruction. Although isolationism was practiced officially, Ryukyuans under the direction of the Prince of Satsuma were permitted to maintain free trade. The staple food, the sweet potato, was introduced in 1605, and techniques of sugar refinement were instituted in 1623.

For more than 200 years Okinawa enjoyed relative prosperity, peace, and virtual independence. In 1853, Americans arrived in Naha Harbor under the command of Commodore Matthew C. Perry. Perry actually purchased land at Naha for a U.S. Naval Coaling Station, but his subsequent success in opening the greater markets of Japan caused the United States to forget about immediate commercial activity in the Ryukyus.

Japan soon began expansion plans, and pre-World War II Ryukyuan history records the story of increasing Japanese political and cultural influence.

In spite of the fact that the Ryukyuans were a proud people, with their own history and culture, they were treated as social inferiors by the Japanese. Since 1 April 1945 the Ryukyuans have again considered themselves as separated from Japan. They are preparing now, with the help and guidance of United States Military Government, to reach their own full stature, and regain their individual identity, culture

and prestige.

THE BATTLE OF OKINAWA.....

Highly publicized as the last great conflict of World War II, was of savage intensity. Today the marks of this bitter fight are still visible throughout the southern half of the island.

Although Okinawa was a word added to the average American's vocabulary only after the actual invasion of the island, our military operations against the enemy began on 19 October 1944. On that date, carrier-based planes completely demolished the city of Naha and vital military installations, causing the Japanese army, which had arrived in force in June, to start the elaborate cave fortifications which proved so effective in the campaign which followed. Reconnaissance photographs provided details essential for pre-invasion planning.

On Easter Morning, 1 April 1945, the 2nd Marine Division feinted an attack on the southeast coast, successfully drawing enemy defenses away from the main landing which began at 0830 near Kadena Airfield. The 7th and 96th Army Divisions, along with the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions, found comparatively light resistance. In one day the beachhead was established with the capture of both the Kadena and Yontan Airfields. On 2 April, the 7th Army Division divided the island in a drive to the west coast. By 5 April the XXIV Army Corps, commanded by Lt. Gen. John R. Hodge, with the present Military Governor, Major General J. R. Sheetz, commanding the corps artillery, began hitting south; the III Marine Amphibious Corps pushed north.

Ryukyuan native dances are unique and colorful. Troupes of artists often visit service clubs and theaters to demonstrate this beautiful art form.

First heavy resistance by the Japanese was encountered on 7 April by the 96th Army Division along the Machinato-Yonabaru line where it engaged with the Japanese 32nd Army in the fiercest artillery duel of the Pacific warfare.

Meanwhile, the marines met only token resistance; by 5 May, they had secured the northern part of the island without significant battles.

A minor skirmish on the neighboring island of Ie Shima by units of the 77th Division resulted in world-wide headlines when the GIs' favorite correspondent, Ernie Pyle, met his death. Ie Shima later received more notice when the Japanese peace mission landed there on the historic flight to Manila.

In the south, the 96th and 27th Divisions continued to meet terrific resistance, and on 24 April the 77th relieved the 96th which had suffered more than 50 per cent casualties. On 5 May the Marines moved in with the Army and aided in the encircling movement which resulted in the fall of Shuri on 31 May, and in the securing of the Naha area on 13 June.

On 18 June, General Buckner was killed as he viewed the battle from an observation point in the front lines. He was replaced as Tenth Army Commander by General "Vinegar Joe" Stillwell.

When General Ushijima, Commander of the Japanese troops, and his chief of staff committed hara-kiri at the extreme southern tip of the island (giving rise to many subsequent tales about "Suicide Cliff"), the major portion of the campaign was over. Isolated groups of Japanese fanatics held out for months, but on 10 September

at Tenth Army Headquarters General Stillwell received the formal surrender of the enemy.

MILITARY GOVERNMENT'S JOB.....

Is to rehabilitate, reorient, reeducate, and to prevent disease, hunger, and unrest in the Ryukyu Islands. Military Government is working with the native people in the following major activities: Agriculture, fishing, finance, business, government, supply, education, public health, public works, public welfare, transportation, commerce, labor, law enforcement, conservation, and land reclamation and resettlement.

In addition Military Government lends a hand in other affairs such as repatriation, budgeting, taxation, communications, social security, mining, banking, foreign relations, public information, culture, wages and prices, and utilities.

The program is planned and directed from Military Government Headquarters at Camp Kue under the supervision of the Deputy Military Governor. Operations are carried on through five Military Government Teams: the Okinawa Team; the Amami Oshima Team in the Northern Ryukyus; the Miyako Team and the Yaeyama Team in the Southern Ryukyus; and the Ryukyuan Team, located on Okinawa. The Ryukyuan Team supervises matters that are Ryukyu-wide in scope. The teams work with the four Ryukyuan provisional governments, - Okinawa, Amami Oshima, Miyako, and Yaeyama. The administration of the Ryukyu Islands was first the responsibility of the Navy. In July 1946 the Army took over and has exercised the administration ever since. Major General J. R. Sheetz, preceded by Major General

An Okinawan art enthusiast admires exhibits of Ryukyuan painting displayed at the Ryukyu University. The exhibition proved outstandingly popular among Americans and Okinawans who expressed great admiration for the talent of local artists.

William W. Eagles, is the third Commanding General and Military Governor. He assumed command in October of 1949. Brigadier General John H. Hinds is Deputy Military Governor.

THE RYUKYUAN PEOPLE.....

Are somewhat shorter and stockier than Japanese, with more prominent noses, higher foreheads, less noticeable cheekbones, and more beard and body hair. The average adult male stands two or three inches above five feet, the women about four inches less. They have olive complexions, black hair, and black or brown eyes.

Although Japanese is their formal language, Okinawans also speak dialects of their own.

The population of the Ryukyu Islands is slightly less than 1,000,000 with more than half of the people living on Okinawa.

Post-war Okinawans now wear American clothing of any kind available. Kimonos are worn by those who still have them. Woven sandals are used, as well as wooden clogs.

Marriages among Ryukyuans are nearly always negotiated by their parents, and so-called "child marriages" are not common.

The average Ryukyuan's religion is based upon animism, a form of nature worship in which the believer regards physical objects as having life or a soul. This belief has been tempered somewhat over a long period by the influence of Shintoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity. The Okinawans generally do not have religious meeting-places comparable to Western churches, and religious observances therefore

commonly take place in homes, at family tombs, at outdoor shrines and temples, and at other chosen outdoor sites.

Music and dancing are important to the social life of most Ryukyu natives. The Dahisen and the Samisen, three-stringed instruments introduced centuries ago from China and Japan, are commonly used to accompany traditional songs and dances of the islands. In addition the natives enjoy movies, plays, concerts, sumo wrestling, karate exhibitions, fencing and judo bouts. They play baseball, volley ball, tennis and ping pong, and have track and field meets.

Ryukyu Islanders are industrious, mild-mannered, clean, and courteous. They have, in recent generations, shown themselves to be almost totally unwarlike. "Saving face" has an important meaning to Okinawans; one should be careful not to cause a native unnecessary embarrassment.

The family is the most important unit in Ryukyu society, with the husband and father as nominal head of the household, although each member of the family is allowed to take care of his own finances and to display strong individualism in other ways.

INCIDENTAL INFORMATION.....

The Ryukyu Islands are southwest of Japan proper, northeast of Formosa and the Philippines, and west of the Bonins...there are 140 islands in the 775 mile chain which screens the East China Sea from the North Pacific. Okinawa, the main island, is just short of 6000 miles from San Francisco, a little less than 1000 air miles from Tokyo and roughly 500 miles from Shanghai...the two main ports are Naha, on the China Sea side,

Military Government assists in the development of new industries to aid in the economic rehabilitation of the Ryukyus. The manufacture of buttons from sea shells is one important aspect of this program.

and White Beach, on the Pacific side...the island is approximately 67 miles long with a width ranging from 3 to 10 miles...two thirds of the island is rugged terrain with hills rising to 1500 feet or more, and in many places the land ends in steep cliffs at the water's edge...southern Okinawa is less rough, with rolling hills, shallow ravines and valleys. The Ryukyus are noted for their frequent typhoons, with 12 to 45 typhoons affecting the islands annually (an average of from three to six can be expected to cross directly over Okinawa)...May to October are the "typhoon months", although extreme winds have been recorded during the winter months as well...with velocities well over 100 miles per hour. From November through May and June, about 75 per cent of the days are cloudy...the weather clears considerably during the summer, with much brilliant sunshine...rainfall is heavy, Naha having an annual average of 82.8 inches...the heaviest rainfall is in June, July, and August. Temperatures in the Ryukyus are generally mild, due to the Japan current which flows northeast among the islands and which is 5 to 15 degrees warmer than the surrounding waters...the average temperature is 72, with 41 the lowest on record, and 96 the highest...January and February are the coolest months...June to September the hottest, averaging around 81 degrees.

The typical soil of the Ryukyus is light clay loam of a reddish color, overlying limestone...there are some areas of white clay and some deposits of gravel...the Naha-Shuri district is covered with a stiff blue or slate colored clay, not common elsewhere in the islands...the stiffness limiting soil fertility.

A considerable number of minerals are found

in the Ryukyus, but deposits of phosphates and coal are the only ones of sufficient size to be commercially valuable...the largest coal deposits are in the Southern islands...phosphates in the Daitos (a small group of islands east of Okinawa) constitute the most important mineral source of the Ryukyus...other minerals in the islands include argil, bauxite, copper, gold, iron, manganese, petroleum, salt, semi-precious stones including garnet and epidote crystals, and sulphur. Vegetation is unusual because it shows a gradation from tropical plants to those typical of temperature zones...depending on whether the area is low or high...vegetation includes banana trees, largely of the fiber-leaf type used by natives for making cloth; bamboos, pines, spruces, firs, junipers, oaks, camphors, mangroves, palms, banyans, peppers, cacti, cycads, rhododendrons, nasturtiums, asters, chrysanthemums, lilies, ferns. Animals include dogs, horses, cattle, Japanese deer, mongooses, mice, rats, bats...four species of pit vipers, most common being habu and mamushi...insects such as mosquitoes, flies, lice, bedbugs, cockroaches, spiders, ants, scorpions, butterflies, fireflies, grasshoppers, dragonflies, locusts, beetles...birds including ravens, robins, snipe, woodpeckers, jays, rock thrushes, titmice, sparrows, starlings, sandpipers, albatrosses, hawks, nightingales, pelicans, fishes of many tropical varieties, as well as bonitos, tunas, sharks, bluefish, eels, flatheads, flounders, flying fish, garfish, herrings, mackerels, mullets, sea basses, snappers, tarpons, barracudas, swordfish, and a great number of shellfish, including lobsters.

YOU OUGHT TO VISIT.....

<u>The Futema Shrine</u>

This "Tori", or gateway, leading to the famous Nami-no-ue Gu Shrine, is a familiar landmark to motorists on Okinawa. It is located near the port on Naha's outskirts.

Located in a cave near a Buddhist temple constructed around 1450, the Shrine was built during the "Golden Age" for Futema Gonjin, guardian god of seafaring men. Large stalactites hanging from the limestone ceiling are an unusual and attractive sight. The Military Government Printing plant is located nearby in a building which formerly housed Yank Magazine and the Daily Okinawan.

Kakazu Ridge

It was here that the 96th Infantry Division ran into the most savage fighting of the entire campaign. The bitter battle raged for 17 days. The Japanese used more artillery and mortar fire than ever before in the Pacific fighting. During the struggle for this ridge the 96th Division killed 4,736 enemy soldiers.

Ryukyu University

Sponsored by Military Government, this is the first University to be established in the Ryukyu Islands. The University is located on the site of Shuri Castle, above the city of Naha. Shuri Castle, which was totally destroyed by heavy bombardment during the battle, was a National Treasure of Japan and site of the Okinawa Prefectural Shinto Shrine in honor of Minamoto Tanetomo, an almost legendary hero whose son was the first king of a united Okinawa. The 32nd Japanese Army headquarters was located in caverns beneath the castle during the combat phase of the Battle of Okinawa. The first class to be graduated from the University will receive degrees in 1953, the 100th anniversary of the landing in Naha by Commodore Matthew C. Perry.

Nakagusuku Castle

Used by the XXIV Corps as a command post during the Battle of Okinawa, Nakagusuku Castle is one of Okinawa's most historic and revered landmarks. The Castle, which was built 500 years ago by an Okinawan hero, Gosamaru, was destroyed as a result of a tragic series of events initiated by Amawari, Gosamaru's treacherous and ambitious rival. Although Gosamaru committed suicide because the king thought him a traitor, he was eventually vindicated and venerated as a hero. Nakagusuku Castle is now a National Park. The Castle commands a marvelous view of Buckner Bay.

Nami-no-ue Gu (Above-the-waves-shrine)

The Shrine is located on a high promontory overlooking Naha harbor. A high gateway on the west side of the road near Naha leads to this most famous shrine on Okinawa. Nami-no-ue Gu has been used for centuries to celebrate the arrival and departure of strangers and to hold outstanding Shinto ceremonies.

Naha City

Because of its excellent harbor, Naha became the capital city of the Ryukyus and the greatest trading center of the Ryukyu Islands. While Columbus was discovering America, Ryukyuans were building forts on either side of Naha Harbor entrance to protect Okinawa from Japanese pirates. Commodore Perry anchored here on 26 May 1853. After 1879, Naha was the Japanese prefectural capital, with a population of 80,000 and modern conveniences such as electricity, water and sewage systems. The city was almost completely destroyed during the war. The new

The fine quality of Okinawan lacquerware has been known to traders and connoisseurs for many years. These craftsmen are practicing techniques which have been passed to them from previous generations of skilled artisans.

city of Naha is now growing up around Tsuboya, the market area, on the outskirts of the old city.

Pottery Center

The oldest pottery center of Okinawa is at Tsuboya, Naha. It has existed for three hundred years, and its products are said to rival those of all other oriental potteries in beauty and fineness of quality.

Tama-Uden

In Shuri the Kings' tombs (Tama-Uden) although badly damaged, may still be seen. They were built in 1477 by King Sho-Shin for the nineteen kings of the second Sho Dynasty, 1422-1879.

Itoman

For generations, the people of Itoman have been known as brave and capable sailors. In their small fishing boats they have searched for the best fishing waters as far south as Micronesia and the Philippines and are said to have touched the coast of Africa. Women of Itoman have traditionally been influential because they controlled the family economy; wives of fishermen purchased the catch from their husbands, and sold the fish in Itoman markets.

Higaonna Museum

At Higaonna on route 13, one mile south of Ishikawa, there is a small museum with a garden. Antique pottery, old lacquerware, stone lanterns and an Okinawan bronze bell are excellent examples of pre-war Okinawan art.

Kin Village

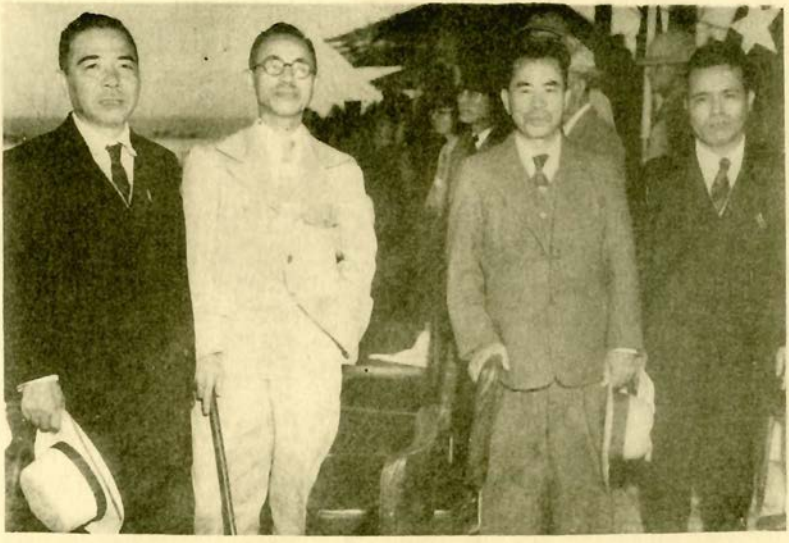
Kin Village on route 13 boasts an ancient Buddhist temple from which a number of art treasures have been removed to other museums. Its Toyama Monument commemorates a citizen, Mr. Toyama, who started the emigration of Okinawans to other countries. Under the town are huge natural subterranean caves, where legend says a dragon once lived. Although they were used during the war as bomb shelters, these caves are now dangerous, for their entrances are mined. Also in Kin is Okawa, the largest and most picturesque spring on Okinawa. Rice paddies extend beyond it to sloping pine-covered hills; beyond these are the blue Pacific and small scattered islands.

Manzo Mo

Following route 1 at Onna in the North, the grotesquely shaped coast line, made up of towering cliffs, gigantic boulders, and white coral formations worn by the waves, is known as Manzo Mo (Wide Plains). The water of the China Sea is brilliant in coloring, with many shades of green and blue. Surf breaks irregularly on reefs and cliffs and beaches of this coast. From a height, submerged reefs are visible.

Todoroko Daki Waterfall

On route 1 near Nago is the highest waterfall on Okinawa, known as the Resounding Waterfall (Todoroko Daki or Todoroko no Taki). Cross a bridge at the village on route 1, just beyond the intersection of Routes 1 and 106; take the road to the right; cross another bridge and drive to the end of the road.



There are four Provisional governments in the Ryukyu Islands charged with directing civil administration. Pictured above are the Chijis, or Governors, of Yaeyama, Miyako, Okinawa and Amami Oshima. They are: Kozen Yoshino, Sosei Gushiken, Koshin Shikiya, and Sanetaka Nakae.

Nago

Nago, in northern Okinawa on route 1, was once a summer resort for Okinawan noblemen, and claimed a population of 15,000. A two-story tile-roofed hospital still remains; there are a large agricultural experiment station and a snake venom laboratory. The pier has been rebuilt, and the town is brisk and progressive.

Hokuzan Castle

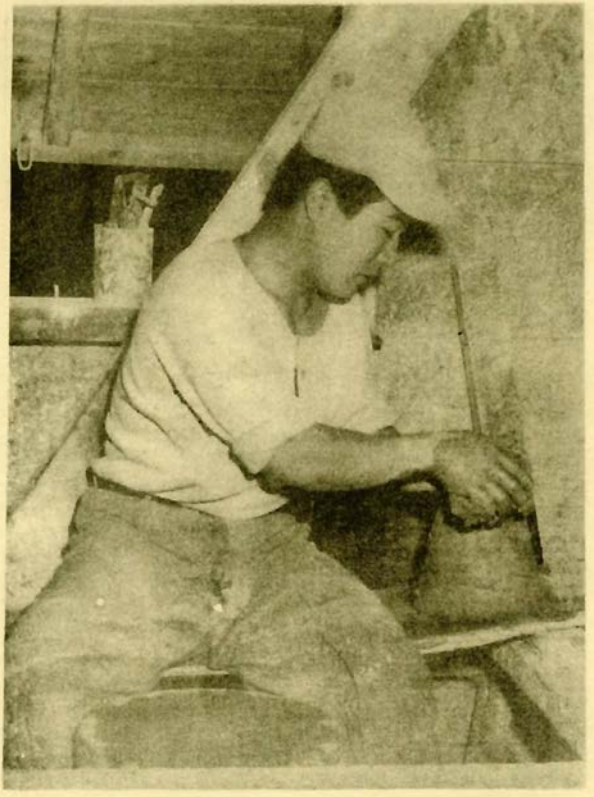
Hokuzan Castle is at Nakajin on Motobu Peninsula, northwest of Nago. Ancient Okinawa was divided into three parts, the North (Hokuzan); the Middle (Chuzan); and the South (Nanzan). Hokuzan Castle was built by the king of Hokuzan early in the fourteenth century. Dense foliage covers most of the castle; the strongly fortified walls still stand; and a cliff on one side drops hundreds of feet to a gorge below. The tori (entrance gate) was built during the twenty-two year reign of the last Japanese Emperor, Showa, at that time the castle was proclaimed a Japanese art treasure.

Toguchi

The people of this port town in northern Okinawa, on the East China Sea, have become more prosperous as fishing boats increased in number. To the west of Toguchi is the island of Ie-Shima, where Ernie Pyle was killed on 18 April, 1945.

Kutaka Shima

The island of Kutaka Shima, two miles east of the southern end of Okinawa, in Buckner Bay, may be seen from the Military Government beach near Chinen. This island, according to the

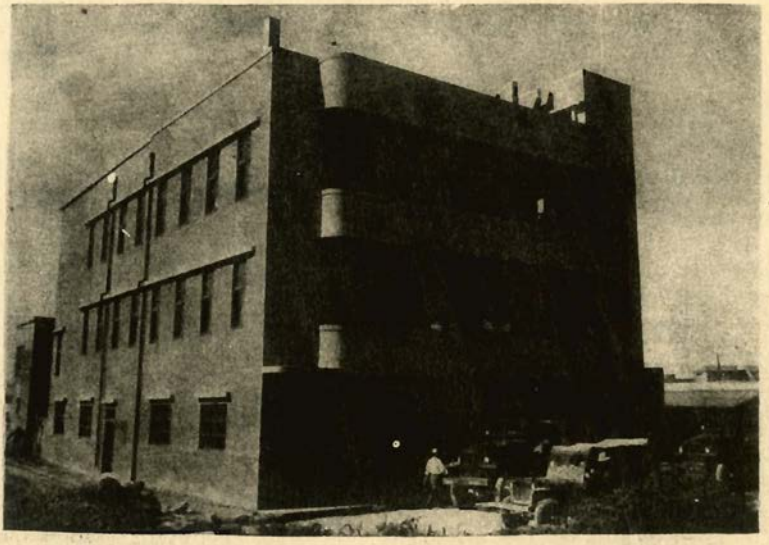


Okinawan pottery makers have a worldwide reputation. At Tsuboya, on the outskirts of Naha, one may follow the progress of these fine cera mics from a lump of clay to the finished product.

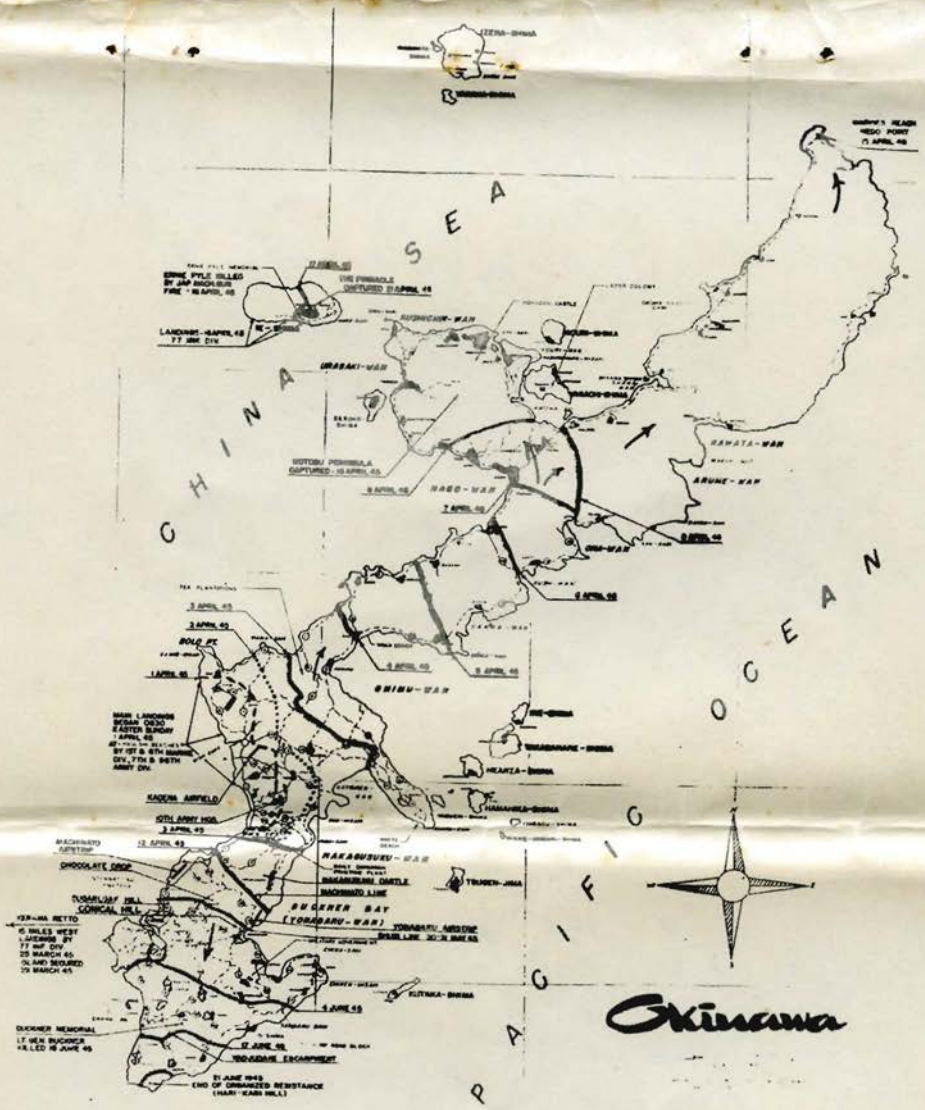
OMORO, Okinawan Book of Genesis, was the first land created in the world. It was there that the first mortals were born of gods; from there men migrated to other land areas. Annual pilgrimages were made by Okinawan kings to Kutaka Shima to pay homage to the gods. Old customs and traditions are still followed on this island.

Yuduri Tomb and Tomb of King Sho-Nei

Yuduri tomb was constructed by King Eiso, about 1250 A.D., but the contents of the tomb were not known to the public until World War II. There are three large stone caskets with elegantly engraved lids and stone doors that move on stone hinges which lead to black crypts beyond. In another tomb nearby, King Sho-nei was buried three hundred years ago. Ruins of these tombs, built high in the cliffs near Urasoe Mura, in the Machinato area, may be seen from route 5, between Shuri and route 1. Activities and discussion by members of the Okinawa Historical Society have been recorded at these tombs and broadcast over radio station AKAR.



This modern building, which houses the Ryukyuan Military Government Team in Naha, is an outstanding example of the reconstruction of war-damaged structures on Okinawa.



Battle-map of Okinawa. (Courtesy Hqs, 20th Air Force)

Ryukyus ID Printing Plant